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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 002593

SIPDIS

NSC STAFF FOR SINGH

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON RECENT SINAI TERROR ATTACKS

REF: A. CAIRO 2453

[1](#)B. CAIRO 2438

[1](#)C. CAIRO 2437

Classified by ECPO Minister-Counselor Michael Corbin for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Ten days after the April 24 terrorist attacks in Dahab and April 26 attacks against MFO units (reftels) the security situation in Sinai remains unsettled. Intensive police operations are continuing, particularly concentrated in the Jebel Maghara region, roughly 60 KM southwest of Al-Arish, where a May 1 skirmish left a police major dead, and two police wounded. Through the media, the GOE is reporting that pursuit operations in the Sinai desert have yielded six armed fugitives killed, and five other fugitives captured. The total number of Bedouin and others detained for questioning in connection with the attacks is unknown, but certainly much higher.

[1](#)2. (C) The GOE is now attributing both the Dahab and MFO attacks to elements of the "Tawheed and Jihad Group," believed to consist mainly of younger Sinai Bedouin strongly influenced by violent Salafist ideology. The GOE has named Nasser Khamis Al-Malahy as the "mastermind" of the Dahab operation, and also believes he was involved in attacks in Taba in October 2004 and Sharm el-Sheikh in July 2005. Again through leaks to the media, the GOE has apparently now determined that contrary to earlier statements, the April 24 bombs in Dahab were certainly deployed by suicide bombers.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Egyptian media is lionizing Police Major Abdel Khaleq Abou Zeid, killed at Jebel Maghara on May 1. Dubbed a martyr, Abou Zeid is being heralded as a patriotic hero who gave his life to fight terrorism. Interior Minister Habib El-Adly posthumously promoted him to the rank of Assistant Minister, which will result in a significantly higher pension for Abou Zeid's family.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Egyptian state media and the pro-government press have also been devoting extra time to programming and articles attacking terrorism and distancing Islam from the recent attacks. A program recently produced and aired on State TV reviewed the attacks of the last two years in the Sinai, describing them as crimes against the Egyptian people and the Egyptian economy, committed by evil persons with warped understanding of Islamic teachings. Mufti of the Republic Sheikh Ali Gomaa appeared on State TV on May 2 both to condemn religious extremism and defend Egypt's traditional Islamic institutions, like Azhar University, against charges that it promotes radical thinking. Sheikh Sayyed Tantawi, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, joined Minister of Religious Endowments Hamdy Zaqzouq in a visit to the scene of the attacks in Dahab.

[1](#)5. (C) Comment: While suspect Nasser Al-Malahy is clearly one of Egypt's most wanted, we note that, following the Taba and Sharm attacks, the GOE had also announced that it had pinpointed and eliminated other "masterminds," while emphasizing the limited and isolated nature of the incidents. Clearly the GOE is now reassessing the nature and scale of the threat in the Sinai. Many observers are arguing that the GOE's approach to development and governance in the Sinai have alienated the indigenous Bedouin - a factor likely exacerbated by the mass arrests and alleged mistreatment of Bedouin youth following the October 2004 incidents. End comment.

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